

AN EVALUATION BY RECOVERED ALCOHOLICS
OF THOSE WHO TRIED TO HELP

An abstract of a Field Report by
Leo F. Peterson
December 1973
Drake University

The problem. It was the purpose of this study to ask recovered alcoholics for their opinions on what worked to help them achieve sobriety.

Procedure. After reviewing current literature, an opinionnaire was prepared. The opinionnaire asked the respondents, recovered alcoholics, for a rating of the Help and Understanding they received from the following six groups:

- 1-Physicians.
- 2-Spouse.
- 3-Clergy.
- 4-Psychiatrists and Psychologists.
- 5-Members of the court, attorneys, and legal officials.
- 6-Recovered Alcoholics.

The opinionnaire was validated by colleagues of the writer who work in the field of alcoholism treatment and by members of the Drake University faculty.

The opinionnaire was presented to the members of five Alcoholics Anonymous clubs in Iowa and to twenty residents of the North Central Alcoholism Research Foundation in Fort Dodge, Iowa. Copies and addressed envelopes were also left in the Carroll, Fort Dodge, and Webster City referral offices of the North Central Alcoholism Research Foundation.

Findings. On the basis of one hundred completed opinionnaires and the results thereof validated through F ratio tests and t-tests, it is the conclusion of this study, that of those who responded to the opinionnaire, they felt that the greatest source of Help and Understanding that they had received while drinking was from Recovered Alcoholics. The amount of Help and Understanding received from the group of Recovered Alcoholics was significantly greater than it was from each of the other five groups. In addition, no one of the other five groups was significantly more effective in Help or Understanding than any other groups out of this five.

AN EVALUATION BY RECOVERED ALCOHOLICS
OF THOSE WHO TRIED TO HELP

A Field Report
Presented to
The School of Graduate Studies
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education

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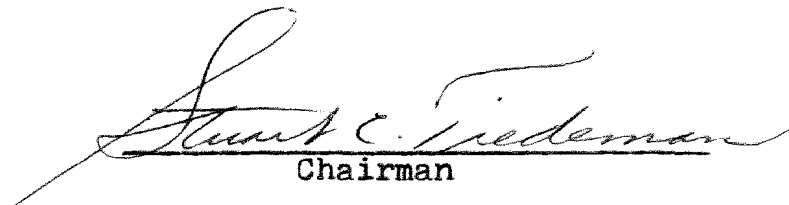
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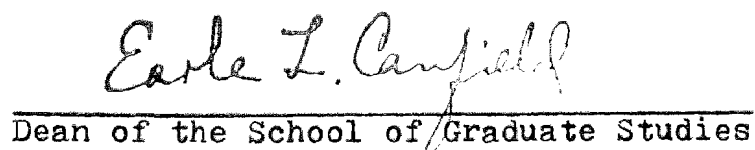

Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Much has been written about helping the alcoholic. As the knowledge about and the identification of the alcoholic increases, more people are entering the picture who are trying to help the alcoholic. Opinions are offered by many people from many occupational fields as to "what works" in helping the alcoholic. However, it would appear to be rare when someone asks the recovered alcoholic, "What worked to help you in attaining sobriety? Who helped you?"

The alcoholic is becoming more easily identified in American society. No longer is he or she considered to be the person who is on skid row. An increased knowledge of what alcoholism really is increases the knowledge of the numbers of those who have problems with alcohol. More people are entering the field of alcoholism treatment. Of course, the fact that the treatment and prevention of alcoholism has become more lucrative in recent years has added people to the field.

Some people feel that only a recovered alcoholic can help the alcoholic. The writer, a recovered alcoholic himself, strongly disagrees with that statement. However, many people who purport to be able to help the alcoholic are quite ineffective. Perhaps this study points that out. If it does, it should not be meant to point out that many people

OPINIONNAIRE

Much has been said and written about helping the alcoholic. In my own instance, many people from many walks of life tried to help me. I think that it is time that someone asked the recovered alcoholic for his opinions on how much influence various people have had in helping him to attain a life free from alcohol. Maybe many have helped; maybe few have helped; maybe none has helped.

If you are an alcoholic who no longer is drinking, no matter what the length of your sobriety, I would like to hear your opinions on what you feel to be true for you. Therefore, I would appreciate your filling out this opinionnaire and mailing it to me in the addressed and stamped envelope. Your name is not required as I only want your honest opinions. The form requires only a few minutes to complete.

1. Age_____

For questions 2-10, kindly check the answer in each which applies to you.

2. Male____; Female_____.

3. Marital status: single____; married____; divorced/
separated____; widowed_____.

4. Present length of abstinence from alcohol:
less than one month____; one through three months____;
four through six months____;
seven through eleven months____; one year or more_____.

5. At any time during your drinking, did a physician (or
physicians) talk to you about your drinking?
Yes____; No____ (If "No," go on to question number six)

Very A
Much Some Little None

(a) If "Yes," how much help did he
(they) give you? (Check one)

(b) How much understanding of you
and your problems did he (they)
have?

6. If you were married at any time during your drinking, please answer this question. If you were not married, go on to question seven.

At any time during your drinking, did your spouse talk to you about your drinking?

Yes _____; No _____ (If "No," go on to question number seven)

	Very Much	Some	A Little	None
(a) If "Yes," how much help did she (he) give you?	_____	_____	_____	_____
(b) How much understanding of you and your problems did she (he) have?	_____	_____	_____	_____

7. At any time during your drinking did a member (or members) of the clergy talk to you about your drinking?

Yes _____; No _____ (If "No," go on to question number eight)

	Very Much	Some	A Little	None
(a) If "Yes," how much help did he (they) give you?	_____	_____	_____	_____
(b) How much understanding of you and your problems did he (they) have?	_____	_____	_____	_____

8. At any time during your drinking did a psychiatrist or psychologist (or more than one of either) talk to you about your drinking?

Yes _____; No _____ (If "No," go on to question number nine)

	Very Much	Some	A Little	None
(a) If "Yes," how much help did he (they) give you?	_____	_____	_____	_____
(b) How much understanding of you and your problem did he (they) have?	_____	_____	_____	_____

9. At any time during your drinking, did a member of our court system, a law enforcement official, or an attorney talk to you about your drinking?

Yes _____; No _____ (If "No," go on to question number ten)

- | | Very
Much | Some | A
Little | None |
|--|--------------|-------|-------------|-------|
| (a) If "Yes," how much help did he (they) give you? | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| (b) How much understanding of you and your problem did he (they) have? | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

10. At any time during your drinking, did a recovered alcoholic (or alcoholics) talk to you?

Yes _____; No _____ (If "No," see below*)

- | | Very
Much | Some | A
Little | None |
|---|--------------|-------|-------------|-------|
| (a) If "Yes," how much help did he (they) give you? | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| (b) How much understanding of you and your problems did he (they) have? | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

*I would like to thank you for taking the time to fill out this opinionnaire. Kindly add your comments, if you desire, on the reverse side of this sheet. I did not ask for your name and it is not at all necessary. However, if you would like to know the resulting totals from the opinionnaires returned, I will be glad to mail them to you. Just put your name on a card and mail it to me or put it on the back of this sheet.

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Analysis

The (a) and (b) parts of the questions have been designed so that they can be rated on a Likert-scale type of value. That is, the answers can be given point values as follows:

Very Much 4 Some 3 A Little 2 None 1

From the one hundred completed opinionnaires used it was possible to calculate a mean rating for each of the six groups of people indicating the "help" and "understanding" received from each group. Since each group will have a mean falling between 4 and 1, it should then be possible to rank the groups as to their effectiveness and understanding while working with the alcoholic. If there are no significant differences between the means of the groups, it would tend to point out that one group is no more effective than any other group.

Significance will be determined through a One-Way Classification of an Analysis of Variance to determine the F ratio. The F ratio indicated a significant variance in both "help" and "understanding," and t-tests were administered to determine the significant differences between groups.

The results of the opinionnaire also make it possible to calculate what percent of those responding had contact with each of the groups. For instance, it was possible to determine what percent of the respondents had spouses who tried to help and just how effective the help was.

CHAPTER IV

THE OPINIONNAIRE RESULTS

The results for the first one hundred completed opinionnaires received are as follows:

1. Age 44.1 (Mean age)
2. Male 89; Female 11.
3. Marital status: single 6; married 66; divorced/separated 25; widowed 3.
4. Present length of abstinence: less than one month 17; one through three months 21; four through six months 15; seven through eleven months 4; one year or more 43.
5. At any time during your drinking, did a physician (or physicians) talk to you about your drinking?

Yes 48; No 52

	Very Much	Some	A Little	None
(a) If "Yes," how much help did he (they) give you?	<u>7</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>15</u>
(b) How much understanding of you and your problems did he have?	<u>5</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>13</u>

6. At any time during your drinking, did your spouse talk to you about your drinking?

Yes 80; No 14 (6 were never married)

	Very Much	Some	A Little	None
(a) If "Yes," how much help...?	<u>16</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>23</u>
(b) How much understanding...?	<u>19</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>15</u>

7. At any time during your drinking did a member (or members) of the clergy talk to you about your drinking?

Yes 40 ; No 60

	Very Much	Some	A Little	None
(a) If "Yes," how much help...?	<u>8</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>10</u>
(b) How much understanding...?	<u>9</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>7</u>

8. At any time during your drinking did a psychiatrist or psychologist (or more than one of either) talk to you about your drinking?

Yes 40 ; No 60

	Very Much	Some	A Little	None
(a) If "Yes," how much help...?	<u>4</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>10</u>
(b) How much understanding...?	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>9</u>

9. At any time during your drinking, did a member of our court system, a law enforcement official, or an attorney talk to you about your drinking?

Yes 41 ; No 59

	Very Much	Some	A Little	None
(a) If "Yes," how much help...?	<u>8</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>13</u>
(b) How much understanding...?	<u>9</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>15</u>

10. At any time during your drinking, did a recovered alcoholic (or alcoholics) talk to you?

Yes 80 ; No 20

	Very Much	Some	A Little	None
(a) If "Yes," how much help...?	<u>51</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>
(b) How much understanding...?	<u>56</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>4</u>

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Percent Having Contact with Various Groups

The results of "Yes" and "No" parts of questions five through ten permit the calculation of the percent of those responding who had contact with each of the groups during the respondents' drinking period(s). The resulting percentages for questions five through ten are:

5. Of the respondents, 48 percent were talked to about their drinking by a physician(s).
6. Of those who were married during their drinking, 85 percent were talked to about their drinking by the spouse.
7. Members of the clergy talked to 40 percent of the respondents about the respondents' drinking.
8. Of the respondents, 40 percent were talked to about their drinking by a psychiatrist(s) or psychologist(s).
9. Of the respondents, 41 percent were talked to about their drinking by a member of the courts, a law enforcement official, or an attorney.
10. Recovered alcoholics talked to 80 percent of the respondents.

Likert Technique

As indicated earlier, a Likert-type scale was used. The answers were given point values as follows:

Very Much 4 Some 3 A Little 2 None 1

The number of responses under each choice was then multiplied by the appropriate above value for each of the four possible responses, the four totals were added, and the sum was divided by the total number of responses for that question resulting in a mean rating for the (a) and (b) parts of questions five through ten. The resulting means for each of the questions are as follows:

	Very Much	Some	A Little	None
5. Physicians.				
(a) How much help?	_____	_____	<u>2.25</u>	_____
(b) How much understanding?	_____	_____	<u>2.27</u>	_____
6. Spouses.				
(a) How much help?	_____	_____	<u>2.44</u>	_____
(b) How much understanding?	_____	<u>2.63</u>	_____	_____
7. Clergy.				
(a) How much help?	_____	_____	<u>2.40</u>	_____
(b) How much understanding?	_____	<u>2.63</u>	_____	_____
8. Psychiatrists and psychologists				
(a) How much help?	_____	_____	<u>2.28</u>	_____
(b) How much understanding?	_____	_____	<u>2.40</u>	_____

	Very Much	Some	A Little	None
9. Members of the court, law enforcement officials, attorneys.				
(a) How much help?	_____	_____	<u>2.32</u>	_____
(b) How much understanding?	_____	_____	<u>2.24</u>	_____
10. Recovered alcoholics.				
(a) How much help?	<u>3.55</u>	_____	_____	_____
(b) How much understanding?	<u>3.53</u>	_____	_____	_____

Analysis of Variance

An analysis of variance, one-way test, to find the F ratio for both "help" and "understanding," was made. The null hypothesis to be tested on the basis of the six groups states that the amount of help and understanding received is homogeneous for the recovered alcoholics for each of the six groups.

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

SUMMARY TABLE (Help)

Source	df	SS	MS	F
Groups	5	92.40	18.48	19.25
Within Groups	323	308.70	.96	////
Total	328	401.10	////	////

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

SUMMARY TABLE (Understanding)

Source	df	SS	MS	F
Groups	5	78.36	15.67	16.49
Within Groups	323	306.04	.95	////
Total	328	384.40	////	////

Explanation of F ratio

In the two tables above, df (degrees of freedom) is determined by (n-1). There were 6 groups, minus 1 for a df of 5 in Groups, and there were 329 "Yes" responses, minus 6, for a df of 323 Within Groups.

Three primary steps were taken. I. Each score was squared, (for instance, in group 5, physicians, the Likert values 4, 3, 2, and 1 were squared and multiplied by the number of responses, 7, 13, 13, and 15) and the sums of all six groups were added for a total of 2707 under "Help."

II. The square total of each group, $4(7)+3(13)+2(13)+1(15)=108^2$ or 11,664 was divided by the number of responses, 48 for this group (physicians), for a resulting total of 243 under "Help" in the Physician group. The totals for all six groups using this formula was 2398.30.

III. The total sum for all of the groups, for instance, $4(n)+3(n)+2(n)+1(n)=108$ (physicians) plus the total sums for the other five groups was then squared (871^2) and divided by the total number of responses, 329, resulting in

a number of 2305.90.

The total for step number II., 2398.30 minus the total for step number III., 2305.90 resulted in a SS (Sum Squared) of 92.40 for Groups under "Help." This number was divided by the degrees of freedom, 5, to give an MS (Mean Squared) of 18.48 for Groups.

The total for step number I., 2707 minus total number III., 2305.90 resulted in a SS of 308.70 for Within Groups. 308.70 divided by the df of 323 for Within Groups yielded an MS of .96 for Within Groups. The MS of Groups, 18.48, divided by the MS for Within Groups yielded an F ratio of 19.25 under "Help."

The same calculations for "Understanding" yielded an F ratio of 16.49.

Using the F Table in J. P. Guilford's Fundamental Statistics in Psychology and Education,¹ it was determined that p (df=5 and 200) was 2.22 (at the .05 level) and 3.11 (at the .01 level). Therefore, with an F ratio of 19.25 for "Help" and an F ratio of 16.49 for "Understanding" we may conclude that the F obtained has a probability of less than .01 of occurring if, in fact, the felt help and understanding obtained was equal across all help and understanding sources. Thus the hypothesis that the amount of help and understanding

¹J. P. Guilford, Fundamental Statistics in Psychology and Education (4th ed.; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), Table F, p. 586.

received by the alcoholics is homogeneous for each of the six groups is rejected.

t-Tests

Since the F ratio indicated that there were differences in the amount of help and understanding received as perceived by the respondents to the opinionnaire, t-Tests were then administered to determine where the differences lay. That is, which group was the most effective? Was there a significant difference for just one group in comparison to the rest of the groups, or were there significant differences between two or more of the groups?

The groups were each given the same number that they had on the opinionnaire. For example, physicians made up group 5. Groups 5, 7, 8 and 9 had 48, 40, 40 and 41 "Yes" responses respectively, and it was found that in order for there to be a significant difference between the Likert Mean for both Help and Understanding between these four groups there would have to be a difference of at least .426 (at the .05 level) or .565 (at the .01 level).

Groups 6 (spouses) and 10 (recovered alcoholics) each had 80 "Yes" responses and it was found that the significant difference between the Likert Means for these two groups would have to be at least .307 (at the .05 level) or .405 (at the .01 level).

For a significant difference between the Mean Averages

of the groups averaging 80 "Yes" responses, groups 6 and 10, and the groups averaging 42 "Yes" responses, groups 5, 7, 8 and 9, there would have to be a difference of at least .370 (at the .05 level) or at least .490 (at the .01 level).

The differences between each group are shown in the two tables on the following page. The differences were arrived at by simply subtracting all of the Means from groups 6 through 10 from group 5 under Help and Understanding, then subtracting the means for groups 7, 8, 9 and 10 from groups 6, then subtracting the means for groups 8, 9, and 10 from 7 and so on.

As indicated in the two tables, the amount of Help and Understanding received by the respondents from group 10, the recovered alcoholics, was significantly greater than any of the other groups.

<u>HELP</u>					
	<u>Groups</u>				
	5	6	7	8	9
Group 6					
	-.19				
Group 7					
	-.15	.04			
Group 8					
	-.03	.16	.12		
Group 9					
	-.07	.12	.08	-.04	
Group 10					
	-1.30**	-1.11**	-1.15**	-1.27**	-1.23**

UNDERSTANDING

	5	6	Groups 7	8	9
Group 6	-.36				
Group 7	-.36	.00			
Group 8	-.13	.23	.23		
Group 9	.03	.21	.39	.16	
Group 10	-1.26**	-.90**	-.90**	-1.13**	-1.29**

** (p at .01)

Group 5 = Physicians

Group 6 = Spouses

Group 7 = Clergy

Group 8 = Psychiatrists or Psychologists

Group 9 = Courts, Attorneys, Law Enforcement

Group 10 = Recovered Alcoholics

It is further indicated that between the five groups other than the Recovered Alcoholics, there are no real differences in the amount of help and understanding received by the respondents as seen by the respondents.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Problem and Procedures

Although many people are now trying to help the alcoholic overcome his or her drinking problem, and many are "suggesting" various modes of successful treatment, it was felt by the writer that the recovered alcoholic himself or herself should have a say as to what was effective in his or her case.

A review of literature revealed many who purported to know how to work with the alcoholic. However, the writer, a recovered alcoholic himself, was intrigued with the idea of asking other recovered alcoholics, "What worked for you? Who was effective while working with you? Did anyone really understand you and your problems?"

Data for the study were collected from an opinionnaire which had been filled out by people who had previously had drinking problems. The opinionnaire asked the respondents to rate the Help and Understanding that was shown by those who had tried to help him or her quit drinking. Specifically, the respondents were asked if they had been talked to about their drinking, during their drinking days by any or all of the following groups: Physician(s); Spouse; Clergy; Psychiatrist(s) or Psychologist; Member of the courts, attorney(s) or law enforcement official(s); and Recovered

Alcoholics. If the respondent had been talked to by any or all of the groups, the respondent was then asked to rate the effectiveness of the Help and Understanding he or she received from each of the groups. A Likert scale rating was used, and each group was given a Mean for Help and a Mean for Understanding.

Conclusion

On the basis of one hundred completed opinionnaires and the results thereof validated through F ratio tests and t-tests it is the conclusion of this study, that of those who responded to the opinionnaire, they felt that the greatest source of Help and Understanding that they had received while drinking was from Recovered Alcoholics. The amount of Help and Understanding received from the group of Recovered Alcoholics was significantly greater than it was from each of the other five groups. In addition, no one of the other five groups was significantly more effective in Help or Understanding than any other group out of this five.

The enthusiasm with which the opinionnaire was received might be noted. Perhaps there is much to learn by asking the recovered alcoholic for his thoughts and feelings about alcohol abuse and alcoholism.

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